

ARIZONA VETERANS' SERVICE ADVISORY COMMISSION
4141 N. Third Street- Phoenix AZ 85012
Thursday – February 14, 2008

M I N U T E S

Call to Order - The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m. by Chairman Dingwall.

Present

Advisory Commissioners

Tom Dingwall
Kenneth Yamanouchi
Gary Fredericks
Webb Ellis
Larry McKim
Linda Fulkerson
Bill Lunsford

Arizona Department of Veterans' Services

R. Gregg Maxon, Director
Gabe Forsberg, Plans & Development Manager
Lee Borgen, Veterans Benefits Counselor
Diane D'Angelo, Outreach Coordinator

Other Guests

Jeff Dollins, Assistant Attorney General

Absent

Tom Heaney
Phillip Quochytewa

Opening – Vice Chair Yamanouchi made a motion to approve the minutes of the January 12, 2008 meeting as published; the motion was seconded and carried.

Correspondence Sent and Received – Per Gabe Forsberg, there was nothing to report.

Director's Report – Director Maxon reported the following:

- The Arizona State Veteran Home
 - Recently resurveyed by the Arizona Department of Health Services (DHS), they are being surveyed now by the US Department of Veterans Affairs. Some areas of concern were noted in the report and will be immediately addressed. The survey is doing very well. In March or April, DHS is expected in the facility again.
 - Susan Bender, the administrator of the Home, will stay with the agency for a year. New Director of Nursing has been hired and started this month.
 - Accounts receivable have improved, but there are some third-party payers who are slow to pay (such as AHCCCS).
 - Involuntary discharges may be necessary for veterans who aren't paying their bills.
- General Maxon is committed to making Veterans Benefits Counselors (VBCs) available to veterans within a hour drive. Maps were distributed displaying 120-mile radius areas throughout the state to illustrate coverage.
 - VBC offices have been or are being opened in Parker, Safford, Show Low, Chinlee, Page and Cottonwood. Second counselors are being added to offices with higher traffic.
 - VBCs have helped more than 22,000 veterans to date. There are 7100 cases now open.

- In December alone, \$22 million came into the state from the US Department of Veterans Affairs. About 1/3 is a direct result of actions taken by ADVS. The \$3 million to hire additional VBCs is an excellent investment.
- Governor Napolitano came to the UAV meeting on February 2, and supported the agency's investment in VBCs. She will not ask for a budget reduction from the agency. She encouraged UAV members to make their budget concerns known to their legislators.
- The Joint Legislative Budget Committee discussed the FY 2008/2009 budget. The chairmen of the Committee have removed their recommendations to cut the agency's budget.
- There is a \$10 million set-aside in the budget as our portion of the expense to build the state veteran home in Tucson.
 - Those funds will be removed from the budget this year and put back into the FY 2008/2009 budget.
 - The VA will move forward so long as the \$10 million is available on the July 15 of the FY in which the grant will be initiated.
 - The facility is expected to be built 2-3 years from now.
- License plates are generating about \$60,000 a month
 - Gold Star Families plate has been proposed (1700 plates will pay for the initiative's start-up costs)
 - "Support our Troops" plate has been suggested for Arizona – General Maxon did not know what organization was to receive funds generated.

Region 3 Meeting Action Items (Sierra Vista) – Commissioner McKim did an excellent job setting up email groups to ensure that veterans were invited to the meeting. He asked why we were not doing these types of town hall meetings in Tucson and Phoenix. He also recommended that we involve the City of Tucson's Veterans Affairs Committee.

Region 2 Meeting – Determine Location - Commissioner Ellis reports that it will be held on April 12 in Springerville. The meeting address is American Legion Post #30,825 E. Main, Springerville, AZ 85938. The flyer design will be changed to the one used by Commissioner McKim. Diane D'Angelo suggested that the town hall meeting be advertised through the Church of the Later Day Saints stakes in the five-county area. Window Rock or Chinlee could be very successful and that location will be considered for next year. Commissioner Ellis is updating his list of invitees and will send out invitations to local officials, VSOs, local posts and chapters, and the VA.

Commissioner Quochytewa spoke with Commissioner Ellis about the opportunity to hold a meeting specifically for Native American veterans on Friday night before the meeting (April 11, 2008). He is still trying to schedule that meeting.

Strategic Plan Revision – The Arizona Revised Statute 41-602 indicates the purpose of the commission is to provide policy advice to the Governor and the director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services. The following ideas were discussed:

- An annual report could be prepared by the Commission instead of calling a meeting with the Governor and the plan modified to read: "Communicate at least yearly with Governor and director of the Arizona Department of Veterans' Services on the top issues affecting veterans in the state of Arizona."
- The Governor might use the advice from the Advisory Commission as it relates to bills introduced during the session.

- Dave Hampton puts out a weekly legislative summary that would be helpful.
- The Commission might also prioritize bills, as some may or may not have an impact on veterans (such as the Support our Troops license plates).
- The Commission could survey their assigned regions and garner opinions about proposed legislation.
- Linda Fulkerson will prepare a briefing on the state legislative issues affecting veterans. She will present her information to the Commission at the next meeting.
- The Commission could provide the Governor information of importance to the veteran community at the end of the year, She could then use the information as she develops her State of the State address.
- The Commission might consider endorsing the Veterans Research Council's final report.
- Commissioner McKim proposed sending out both the legislative summary and the VRC final report to veterans in their assigned regions to collect feedback.

Specific changes to the strategic plan were discussed:

- Under the first goal:
 - Delete #4 and #5 on the strategic plan.
- Under the 2nd goal:
 - Move Goal #3 to the
 - Eliminate 2.b.
 - Eliminate 3.a., but leave #3 as written.
- Under the 3rd goal:
 - Drop 1. and 1.a. Public Relations are accomplished by the town hall meetings

Commissioner Fredericks is going to provide a straw man strategic plan revision on regional responsibilities for commissioners and present it at the next meeting.

Adjournment – Chairman Dingwall adjourned the meeting at 12:11 p.m. The next regular meeting will be held at 10:00 a.m. on March 13, 2008 at the State Veteran Home, 4141 North Third Street, Phoenix, Arizona.